Adventures in ODYSSEY
FOCUS ON THE FAMILY® PRESENTS
THE IMAGINATION STATION®
5
Showdown with the Shepherd
MARIANNE HERING • BROCK EASTMAN

Praise for The Imagination Station® books

These books are a great combination of history and adventure in a clean manner perfect for young children.

—Margie B., *My Springfield Mommy* blog These books will help my kids enjoy history.

—Beth S., third-grade public school teacher

Colorado Springs, Colorado

[The Imagination Station books] focus on God much more than the Magic Tree House books do.

—Emilee, age 7, Waynesboro, Pennsylvania My nine-year-old son has already read [the first two books], one of them twice. He is very eager to read more in the series too. I am planning on reading them out loud to my younger son.

—Abbi C., mother of four, Minnesota

Showdown with the Shepherd

BOOK 5

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FOCUS ON THE FAMILY® • ADVENTURES IN ODYSSEY®
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Dad, did you imagine? A journey has to begin somewhere, and writing this book began when you introduced Tiff and me to Adventures in Odyssey. When I was six years old, I never thought I'd be writing this book for the series. Thanks, Dad, for getting me started.

—BDE

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Prologue

This story begins with an older gentleman named Mr. Whittaker. He's an inventor who owns an old house called Whit's End.

Mr. Whittaker invented the Imagination Station. It lets kids see history in person. It's a lot like a time machine.

One day two cousins, Patrick and Beth, came to Whit's End to use the Imagination Station. But it was broken.

Patrick touched the Imagination Station. Suddenly the machine lit up! The Imagination Station worked for the cousins.

Mr. Whittaker was surprised. He told the cousins about his last trip in the Imagination Station.

He had visited a relative named Albert, who lived in England long ago.

The men exchanged special rings. Albert gave Mr. Whittaker a ring with a rose on it. Mr. Whittaker gave Albert a ring with a knight's head on it—the Whittaker crest.

Then Albert got in trouble. Mr. Whittaker received notes asking for help for Albert.

The cousins went on four adventures to help Albert. They visited the Vikings, the ancient Romans, Kublai Khan, and an English castle.

In England, a man named Hugh took the ring that Mr. Whittaker had given Albert.

Hugh jumped into the Imagination Station and disappeared.

Mr. Whittaker still can't travel in the Imagination Station. He thinks it's because Hugh has the special ring. The ring causes a glitch in the Imagination Station's computer.

Now Patrick and Beth are starting a new adventure. They need to find out where Hugh went—and when. The cousins must follow Hugh and stop him from causing problems in history. But most important, they need to get the special ring back.

Can the cousins do it?

The Workshop

"Hi, Mr. Whittaker," Patrick and Beth said at the same time. It was Friday after school. The cousins had come to Whit's End to visit their friend.

Mr. Whittaker shut a panel on the side of the Imagination Station. He looked up at them and smiled.

"Good afternoon," Mr. Whittaker said.

Beth thought he looked tired. *Did he work all night and day?* she wondered.

"Is the machine fixed yet?" Patrick asked.

"Almost," Mr. Whittaker said.

"Have you found Hugh?" asked Beth.

"I've programmed the Imagination Station. It will now find the ring Hugh took," he said. "I'd like to send you after it. That is, if you're willing to go."

"We sure are!" said Patrick.

"Where are we going?" Beth asked.

"To the Holy Land when the kings of Israel ruled," Mr. Whittaker said. "I've put your costumes in the changing rooms."

The cousins changed clothes in separate rooms.

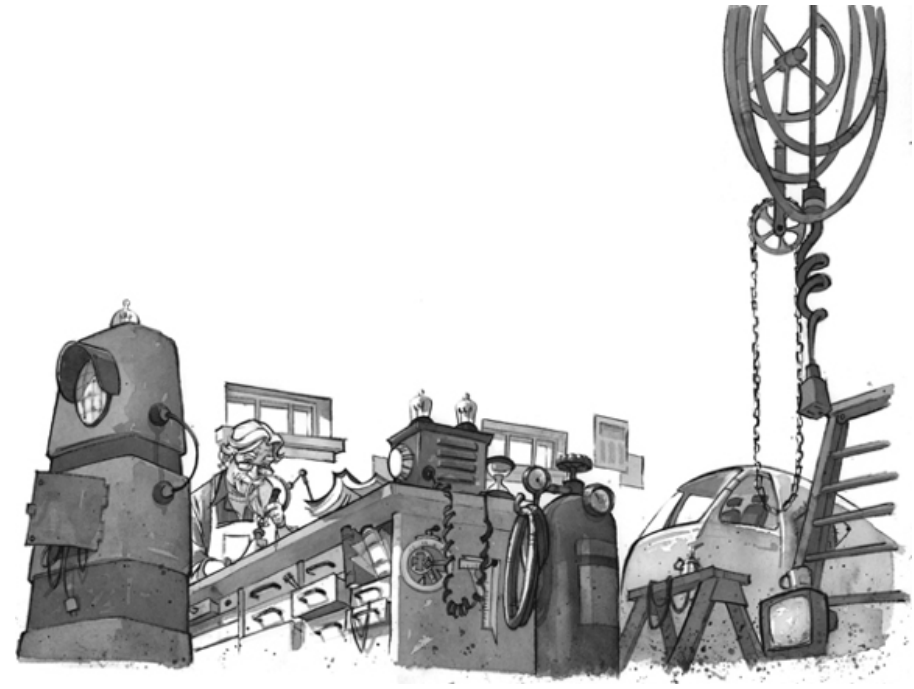
Beth came out first. She wore a plain wool tunic. It had a tan vest and belt. Patrick's tunic was like Beth's. But his didn't have a vest. Instead a tan sash wrapped around into a belt.

Mr. Whittaker then gave Beth a silver harmonica. He handed Patrick a rope woven with snake knots.

"Why does she get something fun?" Patrick asked. "All I got was this bracelet."

"You'll unravel that mystery when the time comes," Mr. Whittaker said. He gave Patrick a wink. "Why do I have a harmonica?" Beth

asked. “I know how to play a couple of songs.”

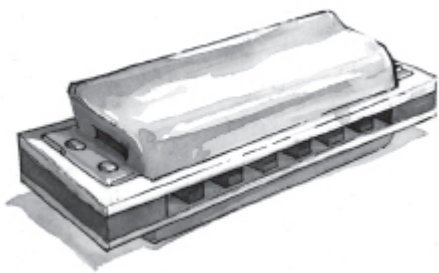


“Which songs?” Mr. Whittaker asked.

“‘The Alphabet Song’ and ‘Jesus Loves Me,’ ” Beth said.

“Those will do,” Mr. Whittaker said. “Now go ahead and climb into the Imagination Station.”

Patrick slipped the bracelet on his wrist. Beth tucked the harmonica inside a pocket. Then she and Patrick stepped into the machine.



“Remember,” Mr. Whittaker said, “you need to find Hugh. Then get the ring from him. Once you put on the ring, the Imagination Station will appear. I programmed it to send you back to Hugh’s time in England.”

Patrick looked at Beth. He swallowed a lump in his throat. Hugh

wasn't very nice.

"How will we get the ring from Hugh?" Patrick asked. "He's a lot bigger than we are."

"Let me tell you something," Mr. Whittaker said. "You two are small. But you're a lot smarter than Hugh. Just use your common sense. God will help you."

Beth smiled.

"Are you both ready?" Mr. Whittaker asked.

The cousins nodded. Patrick and Beth leaned back in their seats. The inside of the Imagination Station reminded Patrick of a helicopter cockpit.

Mr. Whittaker tapped the dashboard next to the red button. "The machine is programmed," he said. "Press the button when you're ready."

Mr. Whittaker stepped back. He walked over to a desk where a computer sat.

Beth pushed the red button.

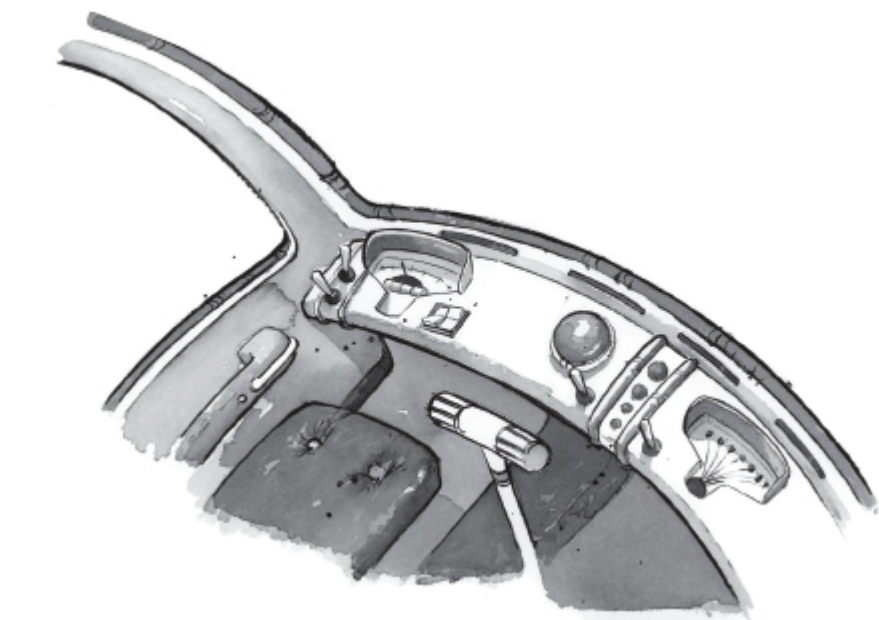
The Imagination Station started to shake.

Beth knew what was about to happen. She waited for the rumbling. Patrick imagined a helicopter taking off. He pushed his body into the seat and waited.

The machine jerked forward. The rumble grew louder.

The machine whirled.

Suddenly, everything went black.



The Bear

The Imagination Station door opened. Bright sunlight came into the machine.

Patrick and Beth stepped out. They were standing in the middle of a tree grove.

A breeze picked up. Leaves rustled in the trees. They heard a soft *whoosh.* The Imagination Station disappeared.

"Do we have to come back here to find the machine?" Beth asked. "Or will it come only when we have the ring?"

Patrick shrugged. "I'm not sure," he said. "It does different things at different times. But it always seems to show up when we need it. Let's hope it does this time."

Beth's gaze went to a nearby bush. A piece of white cloth was tied to it. It waved like a small flag. She went over and plucked the cloth from the branch.

"It's an old-fashioned hankie," she said.

"Bible-times old or knights-and-castles old?" Patrick asked.

"Knights and castles," Beth said. "This hankie must belong to Hugh."

She tucked the hankie inside her tunic.

"At least we know Hugh came through here," Patrick said. "That's a start."

Suddenly, from somewhere, they heard a low growl. The cousins spun around.

"What was that?" Beth asked, alarmed.

Patrick pointed and shouted, "Look!"

A black bear ambled down a grassy hill.

Beth shrieked. The bear looked up at them. It slowly turned and moved in their direction.

"What do we do?" Beth asked.

“Don’t move,” Patrick said. “I learned about this in Cub Scouts.”

“Don’t move? That’s crazy!” Beth said. Everything inside her was telling her to run and run fast.

“No! Don’t make any quick moves. And don’t look the bear in the eyes. It’ll take that as a challenge,” said Patrick.

“I don’t think I can stand still for very long,” Beth said.

“We can back away from the bear slowly,” Patrick said. “Most bears don’t like the taste of humans.”

“Does this bear know that?” Beth whispered.

The bear came closer. It sniffed the air. Then it growled.

“Patrick!” Beth said with a gasp. “We have to do something!”

“Back up very slowly toward that tree,” Patrick said. “If he charges at us, then climb as high as you can.”

The cousins moved backward as slowly as they could. The bear snorted as it watched them.

The cousins reached the tree.

The bear pawed the ground and snorted again. Then it lurched forward. It charged at them.

“Climb!” Patrick shouted. The cousins turned to the tree.

GRRR!

Patrick used his hands and a knee to make a step for Beth. Her hands barely reached the lowest branch. Patrick lifted Beth’s foot higher.

GRRR!

Patrick threw Beth upward. She pulled herself onto the branch. He looked back at the bear. It was coming fast.

Beth reached down for Patrick’s hand.

He jumped up. His fingers touched Beth’s. But his hand slipped through hers.

Patrick made eye contact. The bear stared back. It opened its mouth. Patrick could see its sharp white teeth.

Patrick threw himself at the tree. He jumped and clawed upward.

This time Beth grabbed hold of his wrist. She felt the knots of his bracelet dig into her palm.

Patrick dangled by one arm.

ROWL!

Beth was afraid she would lose him. Then he reached up with his free hand and grabbed the branch.

The bear came charging at them. Patrick swung his legs up just in time.

"Go higher!" Patrick shouted.

Beth scrambled higher. Patrick followed.

"Jump higher," Beth said. "Hurry!"

"I *am* hurrying!" Patrick said.

Patrick spun around. The bear was only ten feet away. It rose up on its hind legs.

It raised its snout up and sniffed again. Then it began to claw at the tree. It rose up higher on its back legs and growled.

It was only inches from Patrick's foot.

GRRR!

"Up!" Beth shouted.

Patrick reached for the next branch. But it was too late.

The bear swung a paw and caught Patrick's sandal. It flew off. Patrick yanked his foot away.

“My sandal!” Patrick cried.

The bear dropped down on all fours. It bit at the leather sole of the sandal and shook it back and forth.

Thump!

The bear flinched. The shoe fell from its mouth.

Another *thump,* and the cousins saw a rock bounce off the bear’s head.

The bear took a few steps back. It snorted from pain.

“Where did that come from?” Beth asked.

Patrick wondered too.

Thump!

The next stone hit the bear’s body. The beast gave a painful howl. It growled one last time. Then it ran off into the trees.

The cousins looked around to see where the rocks had come from.

“There!” Beth said. She pointed toward a large tree. Next to the tree stood a young man. Beth thought he must be a little older than they were.

The young man held a long strap in one hand. He tossed a stone up and down in the other.

“Come on down!” he shouted with a laugh. “It’s safe now.”

The Shepherd

Patrick and Beth climbed down to the ground. The boy walked toward them. He wore a tunic covered with a brown vest. He had dark red hair and tanned skin.

The boy tucked the rock inside a shoulder bag.

"Are you all right?" he asked.

Patrick dusted himself off. "Yes, thank you," he said.

Patrick grabbed his sandal. It had teeth marks on the heel.

"That could have been us," Beth said. She looked at the young man. "Thank you very much for saving us."

"My pleasure," the young man said.

"You must have great aim," Patrick said to the young man. "How did you hit that bear from so far away?"

The young man shrugged. Then he held up the leather strap. "I'm a shepherd. I get time to practice. My sling has saved a lot of my sheep."

A sling, Beth thought. There was something familiar about a boy and a sling.

"Well, thank you again," she said.

"You should thank God," the young man said. He put the sling in his shoulder bag. "Bears can climb trees.

I don't usually walk this way. But I happened to see it chasing you."

Beth smiled. "Thank God," she said.

Patrick said, "I'm Patrick."

The young man nodded.

"My name is Beth," Beth said.

The young man bowed to her.

"My name is David, son of Jesse," the young man said.

Beth and Patrick looked at each other. They smiled. *This is the famous David from the Bible*.

"Where are you headed?" David asked.

"We're not sure," Patrick said. "We're a little lost."

"Where are *you* going?" Beth asked.

"To the Valley of Elah," David said.

"Valley of what?" Patrick asked.

"*Elah*," David said more slowly. "It's a kind of tree. You were in one just now."

"What's in the valley?" Patrick asked.

"My brothers. They're with the army of King Saul," David said. "We're in battle with the Philistines."

"The Philistines," Beth said. Then she turned to Patrick. "This is the story about Goliath!"

Patrick smiled.

"Goliath?" David asked. "You know about him?"

"Only what we've heard," Patrick said.

David frowned. "I hope you're not friendly with the Philistines. If you are, then we must part ways here. They want to make my people their slaves. And they curse the living God."

Beth said, "We believe in your God."

David seemed to relax.

"We're looking for someone else, though," Patrick said. "He has long hair and a white shirt. He also wears dark breeches and black boots."

"And he scowls a lot," Beth added.

David looked at them with a puzzled expression.

"No," David said. "I haven't seen him."

"He's probably with the Philistines," Patrick said. "He'd fit in with them."

"Then you may travel with me, if you want," David said. They began to walk.

Beth looked around. "Will we see any more bears?" she asked.

"There are many bears and lions in this country," David said.

"Lions, too?" Patrick asked nervously.

"The lions are always after our lambs," David said. He bent down and picked up a stone. He rubbed his fingers over it. Then he tossed it aside with a grunt.

"What's wrong with it?" Beth asked.

"It's too rough," David said. "I need smooth stones. They fly from the sling faster."

They walked in silence for a while. Patrick and Beth found it hard to keep up with David. He walked very quickly over the rough ground and large rocks.

They walked up a hill.

"We're almost there," David said. "The Valley of Elah."

They reached the top of the hill. Beth expected to see a beautiful

green valley.

But this was dotted with hundreds of tents. In one section the trees had been chopped to stumps. Fire pits burned, filling the sky with a gray haze.

"That's the Philistine camp," David said. He pointed to some tents.

"Why are most of the trees gone?" Beth asked. "And why is there so much smoke?"

David stopped walking and scowled.

"The Philistines destroy everything they come near," David said. "Though I'm not sure why they've cut down the trees. Some believe they have a secret way to fight. But by the power of God, we'll stop them!"

Patrick asked, "Are you going into the battle?"

David lowered his head. He looked embarrassed.

"My father thinks I'm too young to fight," David said. He patted the leather bag. "I'm taking food to my three older brothers and the army captains."

"I'm sure they'll be glad for it," Beth said.

David looked at her sadly. "I don't think they're ever glad of anything I do."

He walked on ahead. Patrick and Beth followed him.

"It looks like a war zone," Patrick said.

Beth nodded. She thought so too. She didn't remember anything in the Bible about a Philistine secret weapon. But if Hugh was with the Philistines, anything bad was possible.

The Brothers

The cousins thought the Philistine camp looked organized and powerful. The Israelite camp looked small and ragtag.

"Is this all the people you have?" Patrick asked.

David nodded and said, "Yes. But I believe we will be victorious."

"Why do you believe that?" Beth asked.

"Because I believe in God," David said. "Come, let's find my brothers."

The cousins followed David. He stayed on a dirt path. It wove through the tents and stores of weapons. Soldiers sat and ate near glowing fire pits.

David stopped at the camp cook's tent.

"Here," David said to the cook, "this food is for the army captains." He opened his bag and took out a lump of cheese. He gave it to the cook.

The cook took the cheese and sniffed it. "It's safe with me," he grunted.

David and the cousins passed a tent that was larger than all the others. Two soldiers stood guard on both sides of the entrance. They held long spears.

"This tent belongs to someone important," Beth said to Patrick.

The front flap was open. Beth leaned her head toward the opening, trying to peek inside.

One soldier scowled at her. He closed the tent flap.

David pointed to a fire a few tents away. One man stood nearby, staring at the fire.

Beth thought he looked as if he were waiting for something or someone.

"That is my eldest brother, Eliab," David said. He picked up his pace.

They walked over to the man. He stood proud and tall in a tunic and leather vest. A sword hung at his side. His nose was straight and his jaw was square. Beth thought he looked like a weight lifter.

"Greetings, Eliab," David called kindly.

The man turned and frowned. "What are you doing here?" Eliab asked.

"Father sent me. I brought food for you and the captains," David said. "I have some grains for you in my bag."

Eliab waved his hand to dismiss David. "Then your job is done," he said. "Go back to your sheep."

Eliab turned his back on them.

Beth thought that Eliab was being rude.

Just then two men walked up to the fire pit. They were dressed like Eliab. The men nodded at David.

"Greetings, brothers," David said cheerfully. He bowed slightly. "Father sends his blessing to you, Abinadab and Shammah."

"Ignore him," Eliab said to the men. "He's only here to watch the battle."

"I am not!" David said.

Eliab flicked his hand at David. "Go away, *boy*. We have men's work to do."

David stepped back a few feet. The cousins did too.

Eliab turned to face his brothers. He asked, "Well? What did you

find?"

Abinadab was as tall as Eliab but not as muscular. He said, "We circled the Philistine camp. They're building something from logs. Something large."

"Are they building a fort?" Eliab asked.

"No," Shammah said. "We've never seen anything like it."

"Show me," said Eliab.

Shammah used his sword to poke the dirt. He scratched lines.

"It has long logs at the sides," Shammah said. Next he drew a circle. "And a round part at the top."

Eliab snorted at Shammah's drawing. "It's probably an altar," he said. "The Philistines must plan to worship their false gods."

Abinadab shook his head. "An altar as tall as a tree? No. It's something else."

"A man in strange clothes appears to be in charge," Shammah said. "His legs are covered in tight, dark cloth. He wears long black coverings on his feet instead of sandals."

"The giant?" asked Eliab. "Goliath?"

"No," Shammah said. "This man is a foreigner. He is pale and frowns a lot."

Patrick and Beth looked at each other. "Hugh," they whispered together.

Shammah's eyes narrowed, and he stepped toward the cousins. He pointed at them. He said, "The new man has the same skin color as these two."

All the brothers' eyes turned toward Patrick and Beth.

Shammah stepped toward them. He lifted his sword and asked, "Who are you?"

"They are with me," David said. He moved in between Shammah and the cousins. "They are *not* spies, if that's what you're thinking."

Shammah's eyes narrowed as he looked at his brother. "And why should I trust *your* word about them?" he asked.

David flinched as if Shammah had struck him on the face. His face turned bright red. He stood up straight.

Suddenly a loud horn blasted. It echoed across the valley.

Everyone turned toward the noise.

Across the valley, a huge man stood on a rock ledge. Even from this distance, Beth could tell he was gigantic. *Humongous* was the word that popped into her head.

He also looked cruel.

A man with a shield came alongside the giant. He looked tiny by comparison. The giant cast a shadow over him.

"Who is that?" asked Beth. But she already knew.

David shot an accusing glance at his brothers. He said, "This giant is

the one who has struck fear into the hearts of our soldiers."

No wonder, Beth thought. *Just looking at him scares me half to death.*

The Giant

All the soldiers in the Israelite camp took up their weapons. They marched with spear and sword toward a brook in the middle of the valley. Their sandaled feet slapped against the dirt. Dust billowed from the ground.

David, Patrick, and Beth followed the soldiers.

The Israelites approached the rock. Patrick looked up at Goliath.

The giant looked about nine feet tall. His body was covered in bronze armor. It went from his head to his shins. Across his shoulders rested a long bronze spear. It looked longer than a school flagpole.

Goliath took the spear from his shoulders and pounded it on the rock. His shield bearer took a nervous step away from him.

The giant shouted to the army before him. “Are you all cowards?” he said.

No one answered.

Goliath shook his spear violently and said, “Choose a man and let him fight me.”

The Israelites watched him silently. David took a step forward, but Eliab dropped a heavy hand on his shoulder.

Goliath shouted, “I will make you a deal. If your man beats me, then my army—and all the Philistines—will serve you. If your man loses, then you will serve us.”

Again, no Israelite said a word.

The Philistine raised both arms and shook his spear again. He roared louder than the bear. “I curse the army of Israel and the God you serve!” he shouted.

Patrick saw David open his bag. The young shepherd took out his sling and a stone. Anger blazed in his eyes.

“How dare he curse God!” David said.

“He doesn’t believe in the living God,” said Shammah. “He’s been

shouting the same thing every day for over a month."

"Will no one fight him?" David asked.

Abinadab laughed and said, "Goliath is stronger than ten men. Who would be crazy enough to go?"

"I would," said David.

"Then go to the king and tell him so," Eliab said. It was a challenge. "He promised to give great wealth to the man who kills this giant."

David frowned and said, "I wouldn't do it for riches. I would do it to glorify the living God before the Philistine army."

The giant pounded his spear against the rock again. "You are all cowards!" Goliath shouted. Then he let out a rumbling laugh. He looked down at the smaller soldier and slapped him on the back.

The man stumbled forward. Goliath spun on his heel and walked out of view.

David turned to his brothers. He looked furious. "Someone must be willing to fight!" he said. "The living God is on our side. He will protect us!"

Eliab grabbed David's arm and pulled him close. "Stop showing off," he said. "Go home before something happens to your little sheep."

"I'm not showing off," David said. "If you won't do it, then I will!"

David yanked his arm away from Eliab's grasp. He turned to the soldiers who had gathered around them. "Do you hear me?" he asked. "If none of you will fight Goliath, then I will!"

David stormed away from his brothers.

Patrick glanced at the three men. They glared at their little brother.

Patrick grabbed Beth's arm. "Come on," he said.

Beth looked angry. She asked, "Why do David's brothers treat him so badly?"

"Maybe because he's smaller than they are," Patrick said. "Or maybe they don't want him to get killed."

The cousins came alongside David.

David was angry. "What has happened to our army?" he asked. "Is the giant right when he calls us all cowards? Well, I'm not a coward."

"We know," Beth said.

David sighed. "They have lost heart," he said. "They have forgotten who gives them strength."

"You!" a soldier shouted and raced up to them. He was dressed in armor and held a sword.

David and the cousins froze where they were.

"Come with me," the soldier said to David.

"Why?" David asked the soldier.

The soldier pointed at the large tent in the center of the camp. He said, "King Saul wants to speak with you—now!"

The King

The soldier led David, Patrick, and Beth to the large, guarded tent. It was the same one Beth had wondered about earlier.

Guards pulled back the flap over the tent entrance. The soldier motioned for David, Patrick, and Beth to enter.

The tent was about the size of her living room at home. Thick, colorful carpets covered the floor. Stacks of pillows lay along the walls or on low couches. Wooden tables were scattered throughout the space.

The tent was lit with torches. Their flames cast a yellow glow across a man's face.

The man was resting on a couch. He wore sandals and a fancy robe. A crown sat on black hair. The man stroked his long beard. The soldier who had brought David and the cousins bowed to him.

"My king," the soldier said, "I bring you David, the youngest son of Jesse from the tribe of Judah. These two are his companions."

The soldier bowed again and left quietly.

The king motioned them forward. David moved first and then stopped at the edge of the couch. He bowed. Patrick and Beth came near David and did the same.

King Saul gazed at the cousins and said, "David, son of Jesse, who are these two children? They are not of your family."

David said, "This is Patrick and his cousin Beth."

"They are not of Israel," the king said.

"No, my king," David said.

"Where are you from?" King Saul asked Patrick and Beth.

"Odyssey," Patrick replied.

The king lifted an eyebrow. "I have never heard of it."

"It's far away from here," Beth said.

King Saul looked at Patrick. "You have a strange name," said the king. "What does 'Pah-trick' mean?"

Patrick swallowed hard. "Mean? I don't know. It was my uncle's name," he said.

King Saul looked at Beth. "Beth? Are you named after our town of *Bethlehem*?"

Beth curtsied. "No, sir," she said. "My name is short for *Elizabeth*."

The king thought for a moment. Then he turned his gaze on David. "You boasted about killing the giant. Is that true?"

"I did not mean to boast, my king," said David. "But by the power of God, I will defeat Goliath."

The king sat up. He said, "How can you fight Goliath? You are but a boy. Goliath has been a warrior his entire life."

"As my father's shepherd," David said, "I have killed lions and bears to save my flock. This giant is no stronger than they are. Not when he defies the army of the living God."

"A nice speech," the king said. "Are you prideful or simply out of your mind?"

"Neither, my king," David said softly.

"The Lord saved me from the mouth of the lion and the claws of the bear. He will save me from this giant."

King Saul rose from the couch and came close to David. The man towered over the shepherd.

"Lions and bears are one thing. But have you seen this giant?" King

Saul asked. “I stand taller than all the men of Israel. And yet Goliath is two heads taller than I am.”

King Saul marked David’s height with his hand. The shepherd came only to the middle of Saul’s chest.

The king paced the tent. His sandals made no sound on the plush rugs. He sighed. “This is a problem.”

“Don’t lose heart, my king,” David said. “I will fight him.”

The king looked at David. Fear was in Saul’s eyes. He said angrily, “I need a man, and God sends me a *boy*?”

The king sat in silence. David and the cousins stood for a moment, waiting. King Saul seemed to be thinking.

“You are brave enough to face Goliath?” the king asked David.

David nodded. “Yes,” he said.

“Then let the Lord be with you,” the king said. He clapped his hands, and two guards came inside.

“Get my armor,” King Saul told them. The two men went to the back of the tent. They opened a large chest and brought out King Saul’s armor.

“You, little shepherd, will wear my armor into battle,” King Saul said to David.

David bowed. The men pulled a shirt made of metal scales over his head. Then a breastplate went on. Even David’s shins were covered with armor. Finally the men placed a bronze helmet on David’s head.

Then King Saul handed David his royal sword.

David tried to walk. The sword clanked against the metal on his shins. David’s knees buckled under the armor’s weight. He could hardly move at all.

Beth shook her head at the sight. The armor was too big. David looked like a boy playing dress-up.

“I can’t go with these,” David said. He dropped the sword and pulled off the armor. Everything fell in a pile on the carpet.

“So shall it be,” King Saul said.

The king pointed to Patrick and said, “You must carry a shield for David.”

Patrick stepped forward. A guard gave him Saul’s shield. Patrick lifted it up. He almost fell over from the weight of it.

The king turned to Beth. “And you must carry Judah’s banner into the battle,” he said. “If David wins, his tribe will be honored.”

Beth was given a pole with a flag on top. It had the picture of a lion on it. She waved it back and forth.

Suddenly loud voices and shouts came from outside.

David, the cousins, the guards, and King Saul looked toward the tent’s entrance.

The tent flap was pulled back. A guard stepped in. “My king,” he

said, “there is a messenger from the Philistines to see you.”

“If you are certain he hasn’t come to kill me, send him in,” the king said.

The guard went out. He quickly returned with a man who carried a small olive branch.

Patrick’s jaw dropped open. Beth gasped.

The messenger was Hugh.

The Trick

Hugh came to the center of the tent. He wore a proud smile.

The guards closed in to capture him.

Hugh raised the olive branch.

"Don't arrest me," Hugh said. "I come as a messenger for the Philistines."

Hugh's eyes widened when he saw the cousins.

"How did you follow me?" Hugh asked.

King Saul glared at Patrick and Beth.

"You know this man?" he asked.

Patrick cleared his throat. "Kind of. From somewhere else," he said.

"He's a troublemaker," Beth said. "Don't listen to him."

Hugh scowled and snorted at her. He looked at the king and said, "You'll want to listen to me. Unless you want a war."

"We have one already," King Saul said. "Deliver your message and be gone."

Hugh smirked.

Patrick looked at Hugh's hands. The ring wasn't on his fingers. Where was it?

Hugh bowed and said, "I bring you tidings from the giant of Gath, Goliath."

As Hugh bent low, Patrick could see a leather strap around Hugh's neck. Was the ring on the strap?

Hugh stood and said, "You have refused to send a warrior to battle Goliath. The Philistines demand you surrender now. Become their slaves, or the Philistines will attack and kill you all."

King Saul leaned forward. "We have selected our champion," he said.

Hugh looked surprised. "And who is your champion?" he asked.

David moved forward and said, "I will challenge Goliath by the

power of God."

Hugh glanced at David. "This boy?" he asked. "How can he defeat Goliath?"

Patrick had a feeling that Hugh had known David would offer to fight. *He must know the story from the Bible*, Patrick thought. *So what is he up to?*

King Saul gazed at Hugh and said,

"How he defeats Goliath is *our* business. I will never surrender. Tell Goliath."

"As you wish," Hugh said. He strode to the tent entrance. He stopped under a torch attached to a pole. "You'll be sorry you followed me!" he said to the cousins.

Hugh suddenly raised his hand and flicked his fingers at the torch. The flames exploded in a bright fury.

A cloud of smoke filled the tent.

Patrick couldn't see anything for a moment. Then he heard King Saul cough. David waved at the smoke to clear it away.

"The messenger has disappeared!" David said.

"Like magic," King Saul said.

Patrick looked around the tent. Beth was gone too!

The Enemy

Beth sat in the middle of a tent. Her hands were tied tightly with leather straps to a post. She wiggled her fingers to keep them from falling asleep.

The tent was empty. Hugh had left her an hour ago. A guard paced just outside the entrance.

Beth felt foolish. She should have known that Hugh would do something sneaky. But she hadn't expected him to make fire and smoke. And she hadn't expected him to grab her.

Hugh had easily pulled Beth out of the tent. At each fire pit, he had thrown fire powder into the flames. A smoke screen had covered them as they left the Israelite camp.

A band of Philistine soldiers had waited for Hugh at the edge of the brook. The men had brought Hugh and Beth safely to the Philistine camp.

Just then Beth heard voices outside Hugh's tent. A moment later the flap was thrown aside, and Hugh entered.

He smirked at her. "Goliath laughed when I told him about the boy," he said.

Beth frowned back at him. "So," she said. "You know how this story ends."

He raised a hand and said, "You mean, how the story *might* end. Anything can change now that I'm here."

Beth shook her head.

Hugh stepped closer to her. "How did you get here?" he asked.

"The same way you did," Beth said.

"But you don't have the ring," Hugh said. "I have it. Is there another way to travel through time?"

"That's for me to know and you to find out," Beth said.

"If you'll help me, I'll untie you," he said.

"No," Beth said. Her eyes were blazing.

Hugh leaned toward her. "You're a silly child," he said. "Don't you see how good we could have it? With everything we know, we could be kings and queens in this land."

"Is that your plan?" Beth asked.

"Part of it," Hugh said with a thin smile. "The Philistines deserve to win this battle. They're the stronger warriors. A boy with a slingshot shouldn't be the victor."

"Isn't that up to God?" Beth asked. "David will win because God is on his side."

Hugh laughed and said, "David might win because he has the element of surprise. So do I. It's a secret weapon."

"A secret weapon? You think you can save Goliath's life?" asked Beth.

"I don't have to save his life," Hugh said.

"Then what are you going to do?" Beth asked.

Hugh chuckled. "That's for me to know and you to find out."

A Philistine soldier stepped into the tent. He bowed down on the floor.

"Rise," Hugh said. "What do you want?"

The man stood. He kept his eyes downcast. "Sir," he said, "you are needed at the work site. The head builder says the job is nearly finished."

Hugh nodded. He went to the tent entrance. Then he said to the soldier, "Bring the girl. I want her to see why she should be afraid."

The soldier untied the leather straps, and Beth stood.

The soldier led her behind Hugh. They came to a wooded hill behind the Philistine camp. She could hear the sounds of sawing and hammering.

They entered through the trees to a small clearing.

What she saw next surprised her.

Men were hammering nails into a large wooden structure. It was at least three stories high.

It was a catapult!

And then she remembered something: Catapults had not been invented yet.

Now she knew why Hugh was so sure of himself. Hugh could take control by using the catapult to attack the Israelites.

He might change history and win!

A man brought Hugh a piece of papyrus.

The man pointed at an area on the thick paper.

Hugh nodded his head. "Good work," he said.

"Shall we test it?" the man asked.

"No, we mustn't let the Israelites know what it can do. We have to

wait until the right moment," Hugh said.

"But you can't do this," Beth said to Hugh. "If you help the Philistines win, then all of history might change!"

Hugh shrugged. "So what?" he asked. "I don't care as long as I'm on the winning side."

Beth groaned. "How can you know the Bible and be such a nasty man?" she asked.

Hugh laughed and said, "The Bible is full of nasty men."

"They don't win in the end," Beth said.

"*I* will," Hugh said. "You'll see tomorrow."

The Song

The fire was hot. Patrick could feel the warmth on his face. But inside he felt cold. He was worried about Beth. He guessed Hugh had taken her. Why?

Nearby, David's brother Eliab stood over a large fire. He stirred a pot of stew.

David sat down next to Patrick. He said, "I'm sorry about your cousin."

Patrick nodded. "Hugh is mean," he said.

"Once Goliath falls, we'll get her back," David said. "I'm sure our Lord will watch over her until then."

Patrick admired David's faith in God. He wished he could be more like the shepherd.

An odd sound echoed across the valley. Everyone stopped to listen. Patrick realized it was the sound of Beth's harmonica. She was playing a song.

Patrick stood up with excitement. "Beth's okay," he said to David. "That's her. She's playing a harmonica."

David looked confused. "A har-moanee-ka?" he asked.

"A harmonica is a musical instrument," Patrick said. "But why is she starting and stopping the song?"

Patrick hummed along to Beth's tune.

Suddenly, he sat up straight. "It's ' The Alphabet Song'!" he said. "We learned it as little kids. It taught us the letters in our alphabet."

"Why would she play that song now?" David asked.

"I don't know," Patrick said.

The song started again. Patrick listened.

This time she made it to the letter *P*. She started again. She got as far as *U*. Then *L*.

Patrick realized what was going on. Beth was sending a message!

Patrick crouched. He used his finger to write the letters in the dirt: *P, U, L.*

Beth began to play again. Each time she stopped, Patrick wrote down the letter.

P, U, L, T, C, A, T, A, P

He wrote nine letters before the music stopped. He waited, but Beth didn't play anything else.

He looked over the letters. Was it a scrambled message?

Patrick began to write words in the dirt.

AT, TAP, CAT

He still had some leftover letters. If only Beth would start again. She didn't.

Tap at cat? No, that wasn't it.

Patrick decided to make some new words. He mixed up the letters too.

UP, PACT, A, PUT, PUL.

"Put up a cat!" Patrick shouted.

David and his brothers looked at Patrick.

"What does that mean?" David asked.

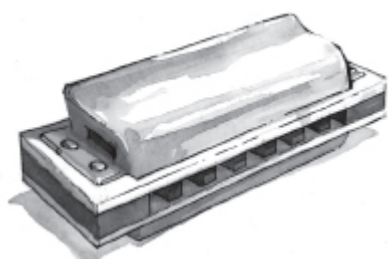
Patrick stood back and looked at all the words. Patrick read more. "Pul-Cat-

A-Tap." He read it again, "Up-A-Cat-Pul."

"Catapult!" shouted Patrick. "Beth is saying *catapult*."

"What is a 'cat-ah-polt'?" Eliab asked.

"It's a weapon," Patrick said. "It throws things through the air."



"Like my sling?" David asked.

"Sort of," Patrick said. "But it's a lot bigger. It can throw large rocks or burning wood."

"Why are you frowning?" David asked.

"A catapult could destroy your whole camp," Patrick said. "Even city walls wouldn't be able to hold up against it. This is *big* trouble."

The Rescue

David and his brothers had fallen asleep inside a tent. The entire camp was still. Night had fallen.

Patrick sat on a large rock in the open air. He couldn't sleep. He was worried about Beth. He fiddled with his bracelet and wondered how to stop Hugh from using the catapult.

An owl hooted. Leaves rustled. The soldiers snored. Only a few guards walked the paths, keeping a watchful eye.

Patrick knew what he had to do.

He waited for a guard to pass by. The soldier disappeared behind a nearby tent. Patrick sprinted for the edge of the camp.

He looked out over the valley. Patrick raced to a patch of high grass. He waited to make sure no one had seen him. Then he ran toward the Philistine camp.

At times he crouched. At times he crawled. He hoped he wouldn't get caught. He also hoped there weren't any snakes, scorpions, lions, or bears in the grass.

The sky was even darker when he came to the brook. No starlight shone on the water. That made it easier for Patrick to cross unseen. He waded quietly across.

With soggy sandals, Patrick reached the Philistine camp. There were so many tents. Which one held Beth?

Torchlight flickered ahead. Patrick quickly ducked between two tents. A guard passed without seeing him.

Then Patrick realized that these tents didn't have guards. Why would they? But there might be guards watching Beth.

He pressed onward. Then he stopped short. Two guards stood outside a tent at the far end of the camp.

Patrick's heart lifted. He hoped it was Beth's tent.

Patrick slipped around to the back of the tent. He got down on his belly and crawled. He found a gap between the canvas and the ground. He wiggled inside.

Patrick looked around the tent. But he couldn't see anything. He waited for his eyes to get used to the pitch black.

He saw a small form on the floor in the middle of the tent.

Someone lay sleeping on the ground.

Patrick tiptoed over and looked at the small shape. It was Beth! She was asleep, but her hands were tied to a tent pole with a leather strap.

Patrick crouched down. He leaned over and put a hand gently over Beth's mouth. He whispered in her ear, "Don't scream. It's me, Patrick."

Beth's eyes opened wide.

Patrick drew back his hand.

Beth smiled. "I'm so glad you're here," she whispered.

Patrick nodded. "We'd better go," he said quietly. He untied the strap.

Beth shook her hands. "My fingers tingle with pins and needles," she said.

Patrick led her to the back of the tent. They both crawled out from underneath the canvas. As they stood to leave, Beth stopped Patrick.

"Wait! We can't leave yet," she said.

"Why not?" Patrick asked.

"Didn't you get my message?" Beth asked.

Patrick's eyes lit up. "Yes," he said. "The catapult."

"He's going to use it on the Israelites after David defeats Goliath," Beth said. "We have to break it."

"How?" Patrick asked.

"I don't know," she said. "Maybe you'll think of something when you see it."

Beth and Patrick sneaked quietly through the camp. They hid behind tents to avoid the guards on watch.

The cousins reached the woods and spotted the catapult. Torches around the bottom gave off a dim light. Patrick could see enough to be worried. The catapult had a large beam attached with several ropes. It looked like a giant arm.

At the end of the beam was a giant bucket. Patrick guessed that the Philistines would put a big boulder in it. Then they would fling the rock at the Israelite camp.

Two soldiers paced back and forth. They were guarding the catapult.

"How do we get past?" Patrick asked.

Suddenly something hit Patrick's back.

"What?" he whispered to Beth.

“I didn’t do anything,” she said.

“Didn’t you tap me on the shoulder?” he asked.

“No,” Beth whispered.

Patrick felt another tap, this time on his leg. A small pebble fell at his feet.

The cousins crouched low in the grass.

“Someone’s throwing rocks,” Beth said.

A hand waved at them from behind a tree. Then David peeked out at them.

Beth and Patrick sneaked through the grass toward the shepherd.

Beth sighed with relief. “I’m so glad you’re here,” she whispered.

“But *why* are you here?” Patrick asked.

“I followed you,” David said. “I thought you might try to rescue Beth.”

Beth smiled. “My heroes,” she said.

David pointed to the catapult. “Is that the giant slingshot?” he asked.

“It’s a catapult,” Patrick said.

“It is big,” David said. His eyes were wide.

“And it’s very powerful,” Patrick said.

“We have to wreck it,” Beth said. “But there are two guards who will stop us.”

“We need a distraction,” Patrick said.

“Beth could play her harmonica over in the woods,” David said.

Beth shook her head. “I don’t have it,” she said. “Hugh took it away from me. That’s why I stopped playing ‘ The Alphabet Song’ earlier.”

Patrick looked at David and asked, “Could you knock out the guards using your sling?”

David shook his head. “It’s too risky,” he said. “I might get only one before the other shouted for help.”

“I have an idea!” Beth said. “David and I could hide in the woods and make snorts like a bear. The men would follow the sounds.”

David nodded. “That’s a great idea,” he said. “Surely the guards would go after a bear. It would be a prize for them to show off to the other soldiers.”

“No,” Patrick said, “what if they follow the sound and catch you two?”

“I’ll take care of that,” said David. “If they move in Beth’s direction, I’ll make a bear noise from somewhere else. Then the guards will come after me.”

“When they do, I’ll make a bear snort from a different place,” Beth said.

“They’ll think the bear is moving,” David said.

“We’ll keep them running in circles,” Beth said. She giggled softly.

“But how will you destroy the catapult?” David asked Patrick.

Patrick sighed and said. “I’m not sure.”

Patrick looked at the large structure. It was made with wood and rope. Should he try to burn it down? He looked at the torches and back at the catapult. It would take a lot of heat to get something that big to catch fire.

“Whatever you’re going to do, you must do it quickly,” David said to Patrick.

Patrick nodded. He wondered what Mr. Whittaker would suggest. There had to be something he could do. He fiddled with the snake-knot bracelet on his wrist.

Patrick’s eyes went from the bracelet to the catapult, then back to the bracelet. “I think I know what to do,” he said.

“What?” Beth asked.

“There’s no time to explain,” Patrick said. He wasn’t even sure it would work.

David patted Patrick on the back. “We’ll take our positions,” David said.

“How will I know if the soldiers are coming back?” Patrick asked.

“I’ll hoot like an owl,” David said.

“Let’s go,” Beth said to David. Then they sneaked off toward the woods.

Patrick crouched low and waited.

A few minutes later, he heard a bearlike growl coming from the woods.

He watched as the guards moved toward each other. They talked for a moment and then grabbed their spears. They charged into the woods.

Patrick slipped the bracelet off his wrist. And then he sprinted for the catapult.

The Knots

Patrick climbed the catapult frame monkey style. It was like playing on a jungle gym. He made it to the bucket.

He could hear Beth, and then David, snorting and growling below. They were doing their bear act for the two guards.

Patrick found two ropes tied to the bucket. The ropes would be used to lower the bucket.

Just like I hoped! he thought.

The knots were tight. He got one knot loose after a minute or two. Then he stopped to look at the end knot of his bracelet. It was a slipknot. He retied the catapult knot in the same way as the bracelet's.

Just then, a gust of wind blew.

Patrick lost his balance and slid down the bucket. He clawed at the air and began to fall. He clamped his legs together around the beam and hooked his ankles. He didn't fall to the ground. But he was now hanging upside down.

Patrick looked at the ground. It was a long drop. His heart pounded.

Then he heard a hooting sound coming from the woods.

Whoo! Whoo!

That was David's signal! The soldiers were coming back! Patrick had to hurry.

He struggled to get upright again. He had to hope the work he'd done would stop Hugh.

Patrick shinnied down the launch beam.

He hit the ground running. He raced for the tree where he'd last been with Beth and David.

A moment later Beth appeared. "How did it go?" she asked.

"I untied one of the ropes," Patrick said. "Then I retied the knot so it'll slip. Tomorrow the Philistines will try to launch the catapult. But the bucket should tilt."

“What do you mean by ‘should’?” Beth asked. “Will the bucket tilt or not?”

“I *think* it will,” Patrick said.

Just then David appeared. He was breathless from running.

“Are the soldiers coming?” Patrick asked.

“No,” David said. “They’re still looking for the bear, I think. I used my sling and tossed a few stones farther away. They heard the sound and followed it.”

“But I heard you hooting,” Patrick said.

David tilted his head. “I didn’t hoot.”

Just then the *Whoo!* sound came again. Patrick also heard wings flapping.

“It was a real owl,” Beth said, giggling.

Patrick saw two torches bobbing. The guards were coming back to the catapult.

“Quick. Before they see us,” Patrick said.

Patrick, Beth, and David made their way out of the woods. They crawled in the tall grass until they reached the brook. They walked across it slowly, careful not to slip on the wet stones.

Finally, they came to the Israelite camp and the tent of David’s brothers.

The sky was now turning from black to gray. Morning was coming. And so was the fearful meeting with the giant Philistine.

Patrick lay awake. He hoped his slipknot would really *slip*.

The Battle

Suddenly a trumpet sounded.

Beth woke and looked at her cousin. He was sitting up and rubbing his eyes.

"Good morning," Beth said.

"Good morning," said Patrick, mumbling.

David's brothers were busy gathering their weapons. They'd already dressed in their armor.

Beth peeked outside the tent. A column of soldiers moved along the path. They were heading toward the front line.

David came around the tent's corner. He held his sling in one hand. His leather bag was slung across his shoulder and hung at his side.

Beth pointed to the bag. The bottom of it was wet. "Did you drop it?"

David shook his head. "I went to the brook early this morning to choose five smooth stones," he said.

Another trumpet sounded. This time it came from the Philistine side.

"We'd better go," David said. "And may God be with us."

The Israelite soldiers made way for David. Patrick and Beth followed him. They passed King Saul, who sat on a large chair. He nodded to them sadly.

David and the cousins emerged from the wall of Israelite soldiers. They faced the valley.

The sun was bright. Beth had to squint to see everything. Ahead, Goliath stood on a huge rock. Beside him was Hugh, who smirked as usual. And in front of both of them stood a shield bearer.

"Oh no!" Patrick said. "I forgot the shield."

"And I forgot the banner," Beth said.

David smiled warmly. "Do not fear," he said. "God is our banner

and shield."

Far behind Goliath stood a long wall of Philistines. Beth swallowed hard. If the two armies came at each other, the three of them would be caught in the middle.

"This is where you stop," David said to Patrick and Beth.

"You don't want us to come with you?" Beth asked.

"You're not part of this fight," David said. "As the champion, I must go alone."

Patrick and David shook hands. Beth suddenly hugged David. He smiled at her and turned and walked toward Goliath.

Beth prayed that Hugh wouldn't be able to change history.

The giant stepped away from Hugh and his shield bearer. Goliath moved forward to the edge of the rock.

"Who will challenge me?" he shouted. Goliath seemed to ignore David and directed his challenge to King Saul.

David took a few steps forward. "I will," he shouted.

The giant acted as if he couldn't tell where the voice had come from. "Did I hear something?" he asked. "Was it a gnat? A mosquito?" He looked back at the Philistine army and laughed.

Goliath turned again and looked down at David. "This is your champion?" the giant asked. "He is but a child. Where is his armor? Where are his weapons?"

"You come with a spear and a sword. I come in the name of the

living God," David said in a loud voice.

The giant leaped from the rock and stood on level ground. Beth felt the ground shake.

"Come and fight me, boy," Goliath shouted. "I will flatten you like a bug."

David took a stone out of his bag. "Today, the Lord will deliver you to me," he said.

Again, Goliath laughed.

David shouted, "Today I will defeat you and your army. Then everyone will know that there is a God in Israel."

The giant suddenly roared. He lifted his spear and charged toward David.

Beth thought her heart would burst. She grabbed Patrick's arm. They both stepped back.

Goliath splashed through the brook. He was on the Israelite side now. Goliath's footfalls rumbled like thunder.

David ran quickly toward the battle line. Then he dropped a stone into his sling.

The giant kept coming.

David swung his arm and the sling back. Then he brought it around his side and over his head. The sling snapped forward, whip-like. The stone flew out.

Beth turned and grabbed Patrick. She pushed her face into Patrick's chest. She couldn't bear to see what happened next.

But she heard it. There was a loud crash. The Israelites sent up a loud cheer.

"Goliath is dead," Patrick said to her. "But Hugh is running away. We can't let him escape!"

The Fire

Patrick took Beth's hand. They ran along the front line of the Israelite army.

"We have to get across the valley before the battle starts," Patrick shouted to Beth. "We'll go around the right side."

The soldiers paid no attention to the cousins. Their eyes were on David.

Patrick glanced at the field. David was kneeling over the fallen giant. Then David picked up Goliath's sword and raised it high. The blade glinted in the sun. There was a loud thud, and the Israelite army shouted again.

Patrick's gaze shot back to Hugh. He was waving his arms and racing through the Philistine line.

On the hillside behind them, the trees seemed to sway. Several fell aside. Patrick realized that the trees had already been cut. The soldiers were knocking them aside to make way for the catapult. A group of men pushed the machine forward into the open.

Hugh had now reached the top of the hill. He began to lead the effort. Patrick headed straight across the valley. Beth was behind him.

From far to his left, Patrick heard David shout, "Attack!"

The soldiers of the living God charged toward the Philistines.

Then Patrick heard a loud cry from the men at the catapult. It sounded like "Fire!"

The beam of the catapult swung upward. The bucket flung up and forward.

"The knots are holding!" Beth cried out.

Hugh must have noticed the knots and fixed them, Patrick thought. *I have failed!*

A giant fireball shot like a comet toward the Israelites.

Patrick and Beth stopped where they were. They watched the red-and-orange fire trail streak across the sky.

The Israelite soldiers also stopped. They watched in awe, their heads tilted back. They didn't know what to make of this ball of flame flying toward them.

Wham!

The ground trembled as the fireball hit the brook. The fireball sputtered and sizzled in the water.

A handful of Israelite soldiers were knocked to the ground. Others rushed forward to help them. Some of the soldiers turned to run away.

"Don't be afraid!" David shouted to the confused men.

This isn't supposed to happen, Beth thought. *Hugh is changing the story!*

Then David lifted the giant's sword high in the air. "In the name of the living God," he shouted, "attack!"

Beth pushed at Patrick. "Go!" she said.

Patrick and Beth got closer to the Philistines' side. Patrick could see them pull the launch beam to the ground. They loaded the bucket with another boulder. It was smothered in tar.

A Philistine put a lighted torch against the large rock. It burst into flame.

Suddenly two of the ropes went slack. The bucket flipped on its side. The fireball fell out of the bucket. It hit the catapult frame. The catapult caught fire. The knots had slipped!

The Philistine soldiers ran in every direction.

"You did it!" Beth shouted.

Patrick spotted Hugh in the crowd. His face looked red with fury.

The tar and fire quickly spread to the wood beams. They burst into flames.

Patrick was relieved.

He looked toward David and the Israelites. The catapult was destroyed. The Israelite soldiers ran toward the Philistine camp.

Patrick saw David cross the brook. He no longer held Goliath's sword. In one hand he held a sling. In the other hand, a stone.

The soldiers fought fiercely. Israelite and Philistine swords clashed. Men thrust their spears at each other.

"Hugh's running away," Beth said.

"We have to follow him," Patrick said. "We have to find him before he uses the ring."

"I don't think he understands how it works," Beth said.

"It doesn't matter," Patrick said. "We still have to get him back to

England in his own time."

Patrick looked for a way around the battle. "This way!" he said.

The cousins rushed toward the Philistine camp. By the time they got to the tents, no soldiers were left. Hugh wasn't in his tent either.

Patrick went back outside. He looked over the valley. Where was Hugh?

"Hugh could be anywhere," Beth said.

Patrick shook his head. "His scheme failed. He must have an escape plan. He'll want to get away in the Imagination Station."

Beth brightened up. "He'll go back to wherever the Imagination Station dropped him off."

"But we don't know where that was," Patrick said.

Beth thought for a moment. Then she said, "I think I know!"

"Where?" Patrick asked.

She pulled out the hankie she had found in a bush. "It might be where he tied this. It was to mark the place where the Imagination Station brought him."

"It makes sense," Patrick said. "It dropped us off in the same place."

Beth waved the hankie in the air.

Patrick smiled.

The two of them dashed away.

The Escape

Patrick and Beth came to the grove of trees where they had first arrived.

The cousins looked on the path for Hugh's boot prints. But they didn't find prints of any sort. The ground was dusty and dry.

Beth looked around nervously for the bear.

"This is the tree we climbed to get away from the bear," she said. She patted the bark. "See? These are the bear's claw marks."

She looked up into the branches. She saw a pair of eyes glaring back at her.

Beth shrieked.

Patrick spun around.

Hugh!

"I can't seem to get rid of you two," Hugh said. He climbed down from the tree. "I heard you coming and thought you were a bear."

Patrick and Beth moved away from him.

Hugh looked at Beth's hand. "So that's where my handkerchief went. I hung it on the bush so I would know where to meet the magic carriage."

Beth tossed it to him. "You can have it back," she said.

The handkerchief fell to the ground.

Hugh leaned down to snatch it up.

Beth saw the leather strap around his neck. Mr. Whittaker's ring slipped out from under Hugh's tunic. It hung in the air on the strap.

Beth looked at Patrick. He had seen it too.

Hugh straightened up. He saw the cousins' gaze. His hand darted up to the ring. He wrapped his fist around it. Then he undid the small knot in the strap.

"Tell me how it works," Hugh said.

"Give me the ring, and I'll show you," Patrick said.

Hugh's eyes narrowed. "I'm not a fool. How do I know you won't use the ring for yourselves? You'll summon the carriage and leave me here to die."

"But we're not like you," Patrick said.

Hugh looked around. "Is this where you found the handkerchief? Is this where the carriage meets us?"

Patrick held out his hand. "Let me have the ring," he said. "We'll find out together."

A growl came from somewhere in the woods.

Hugh jerked his head toward the sound. "What was that?" he asked.

Beth gasped. "It's the bear!"

"He must live around here," said Patrick. "Hurry! Give me the ring!"

Hugh looked as if he might give the ring to Patrick.

But suddenly the bear appeared in the grove.

Hugh cried out and backed away.

"The ring!" Patrick shouted.

"Hurry!" Beth cried. She moved toward the tree.

Hugh said, "The ring summoned the carriage in the cave. Why won't it summon the carriage now?"

The bear looked at them. Then it began to walk toward them. Slowly, at first, and then it started trotting.

Hugh lifted up the ring.

The bear picked up speed.

Beth screamed.

Hugh pushed the ring onto his finger.

The bear was charging at them now.

There was a flicker of light nearby. Then the Imagination Station appeared. The door opened.

Hugh rushed toward the machine.

Patrick grabbed Beth and pushed her. “Go with him!” he shouted.

The bear growled in anger.

Hugh dove into the machine. The door began to close. Beth leaped for the opening and narrowly made it in. Patrick crashed into her. He pushed through the door just before it closed.

They heard the bear growl again. Then the sound suddenly cut off.

“Are you all right?” Patrick asked.

“Yes,” Beth said. She was breathless. “I think so.”

“Hugh?” Patrick called out.

He didn’t answer.

The cousins looked around inside the machine. Hugh wasn’t there.

“What’s this?” Patrick said. He picked something up off the floor. He held it up.

“Mr. Whittaker’s ring!” Beth said. “But where is Hugh?”

And then everything went black.

For the next part of the story, go to TheImaginationStation.com and click on the book *Problems in Plymouth.*

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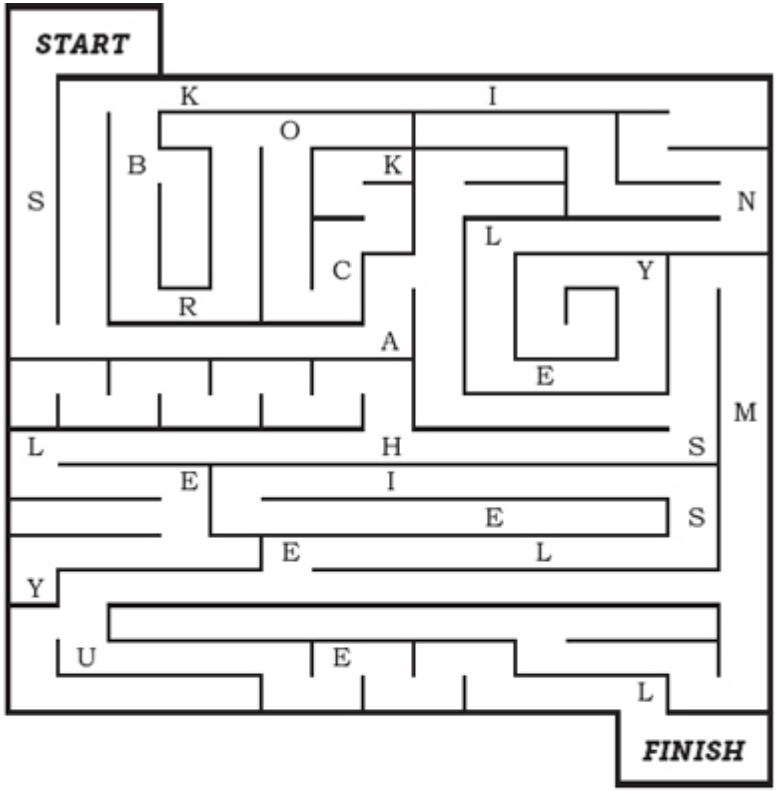

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FOCUS ON THE FAMILY® PRESENTS

THE IMAGINATION STATION®

AUTHOR MARIANNE HERING is former editor of *Focus on the Family Clubhouse*® magazine. She has written more than a dozen children's books. She likes to take walks in the rain with her golden retriever, Chase.

ILLUSTRATOR DAVID HOHN draws and paints books, posters, and projects of all kinds. He works from his studio in Portland, Oregon.

AUTHOR BROCK EASTMAN enjoys having fun with his wife and two daughters. He's writing two other series for older readers: The Quest for Truth and Sages of Darkness. To hear what's next for Brock visit BrockEastman.com.

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